**The new normal is catastrophe: an accelerating vortex underpinned by modern regimes of thought. Thought must begin from the death of thought – a break with the eco-oikonomics of philosophy that underpins memetic regimes of dominance. Cohen[[1]](#footnote-1) 12:**

The point is, today everyone can see that the system is deeply unjust and careening out of control. Unfettered greed has trashed the global economy. And we are trashing the natural world. We are overfishing our oceans, polluting our water with fracking and deepwater drilling, turning to the dirtiest forms of energy on the planet, like the Alberta tar sands. The atmosphere can’t absorb the amount of carbon we are putting into it, creating dangerous warming. The new normal is serial disasters: economic and ecological. —Naomi Klein, “The fight against climate change is down to us—the 99%” [2011] Carbon pollution and over-use of Earth’s natural resources have become so critical that, on current trends, we will need a second planet to meet our needs by 2030, the WWF said on Wednesday. —Agence France-Presse, “Time to find a second Earth, WWF says” [2010] 1. Warnings regarding the planet earth’s imminent depletion of reserves or “life as we know it” arrive today more as routine tweets than events that might give us pause, particularly as the current wars over global “sovereign debt” and economic “crises” swamp attention. The intensifying specter of megadebt—at a time of “peak everything” (peak water, peak oil, peak humans)—dumped into a future despoiled of reserves and earning capacity has a specific relation to this white-out—the “economical” and “ecological” tandem shifts all attention to the first term (or first “eco”). In a post-global present consolidating what is routinely remarked as a neo-feudal order, the titanic shift of hyperwealth to the corporatist few (the so-called 1 %) sets the stage for a shift to control societies anticipating social disruption and the implications of “Occupy” style eruptions—concerning which the U.S. congress hastily passed new unconstitutional rules to apprehend citizens or take down websites. The Ponzi scheme logics of twenty-first century earthscapes portray an array of time-bubbles, catastrophic deferrals, telecratic capture, and a voracious present that seems to practice a sort of tempophagy on itself corresponding with its structural premise of hyper-consumption and perpetual “growth. The supposed urgencies of threatened economic and monetary “collapse” occlude and defer any attention to the imperatives of the biosphere, but this apparent pause or deferral of attention covers over an irreversible mutation. A new phase of unsustainability appears in which a faux status quo ante appears to will to sustain itself as long as possible and at whatever cost; the event of the twenty-first century is that there will be no event, that no crisis will disturb the expansion of consumption beyond all supposed limits or peaks. In such an environment other materialities emerge, reference systems default, and the legacies of anthropo-narcissm go into overdrive in mechanical ways. Supposedly advanced or post-theory theory is no exception—claiming on the one hand ever more verdant comings together of redemptive communities, and discretely restoring many phenomenological tropes that 20th century thought had displaced. This has been characterized as an unfolding eco-eco disaster—a complex at once economic and ecological. [1] The logics of the double oikos appear, today, caught in a self-feeding default. The present volume, in diverse ways, reclaims a certain violence that has seemed occluded or anaesthetized (it is a “present,” after all, palpably beyond “tipping points” yet shy of their fully arrived implications—hence the pop proliferation of “zombie” metaphors: zombie banks, zombie politics, zombie “theory”). It departs from a problem inherent in the “eco” as a metaphoric complex, that of the home (oikos), and the suicidal fashion in which this supposed proper ground recuperates itself from a non-existent position. The figure of an ecology that is ours and that must be saved precludes us from confronting the displacement and dispossession which conditions all production, including the production of homelands. Memory regimes have insistently, silently and anonymously prolonged and defended the construct of “homeland security” (both in its political sense, and in the epistemological sense of being secure in our modes of cognition), but these systems of security have in fact accelerated the vortices of ecocatastrophic imaginaries. This leads to what can be called the zone of telemorphosis: that is, how and whether conceptual practices and cognitive rituals, including those of critical theory, have participated in the production of these horizons, and what, today, breaks with that. If a double logic of eco-eco disaster overlaps with the epoch in deep time geologists now refer to as the “anthropocene,” what critical re-orientations, today, contest what has been characterized as a collective blind or psychotic foreclosure? Nor can one place the blame at the feet alone of an accidental and evil ‘1%’ of corporate culture alone, since an old style revolutionary model does not emerge from this exitless network of systems. More interesting is the way that ‘theory’, with its nostalgic agendas for a properly political world of genuine praxis or feeling has been complicit in its fashion. How might one read the implicit, unseen collaboration that critical agendas coming out of twentieth century master-texts unwittingly maintained with the accelerated trajectories in question? The mesmerizing fixation with cultural histories, the ethics of “others,” the enhancement of subjectivities, “human rights” and institutions of power not only partook of this occlusion but ‘we theorists’ have deferred addressing biospheric collapse, mass extinction events, or the implications of resource wars and “population” culling. It is our sense of justified propriety—our defense of cultures, affects, bodies and others—that allows us to remain secure in our homeland, unaware of all the ruses that maintain that spurious home.

**This is particularly true of climate change and environmental degradation – traditional notions of subjectivity operationalize a regime of thought that makes shared imaginaries impossible, which are a precondition for debate. This is telemorphosis: regimes of memory that pave the way toward extinction. Cohen 2:**

If it is possible to note that theory’s retrieval of human and animal otherness against the horrors of capitalism is akin to political deferrals of the future for the sake of saving the present, then we might ask what might open the reactive self-bound logics beyond homeland security? What has been absent to date is any shared or possible climate change imaginary—or a critical matrix. The problem is that the other materialities that constitute the forces of climate change would pulverize whatever informs “imaginaries” in general, which have always been tropological systems. When a recent critical query asks, for example, how to define “a political subject of climate change” the authors focus on how the “climate crisis shapes particular subjectivities,” properly putting any rhetoric of “crisis” itself to the side as appropriable. The problem lies in the premise of defining a “political subject” or subjectivities to begin with: “Unsurprisingly, much of the current discourse on climate change oscillates between these two poles: most dramatically, between imminent catastrophe and the prospect of renewal; between unimaginable humanitarian disaster and the promise of a green-tech revolution. As such the climate crisis regularly calls forth regimes of risk” [Dibley and Neilson 2010: 144]. This Janus-faced algorithm, the “political subject of climate change” (147), arrives as a form of cognitive disjuncture: “these two images… are alternative figures of the subjectivity of ecological crisis. They are complimentary… . something like a dialectical image of the subjectivity of climate change” (146). On the one hand, this theoretical intervention is typical of the cognitive reflex toward pre-emption of the worst in arguments focused on mitigation, on sustainability, and on various “environmental” agendas—despite none of these answering to what science would demand. Sustainability has been angled to “sustain” the level of comfort and acquisition that the economy of “growth” demands. On the other hand, there is a reflex of occlusion. This straining for a “subjectivity” that would account for a political feature of this new landscape comes up with two mutually canceling algorithms: a desperate sense of imminent crisis and end, alongside a hope of something as lulling as ‘subjectivity’. As a number of essays in the volume imply, one might proceed otherwise: depart or begin from a subject without subjectivity (Catherine Malabou), or an exteriority without interior (Justin Read). The aporia of an era of climate change are structurally different from those that devolved on the torsions of Western metaphysics. They are not the aporia explored by Derrida around the figure of hospitality, taken as an endless refolding that keeps in place, while exposing, a perpetuated and lingering logics that defers the inhospitable. (One mode of deconstruction as solicitation involves shaking the house or structure within which one finds oneself, and this circuit might itself be disturbed by a refusal to occupy.) As Masao Myoshi [2001] first suggested, the logics of extinction compromise the aims of an emancipatory future along with all else. Any project of “formal democracy” runs up not only against the twenty-first century post-democratic telecracies that render that episode of 90’s thought transparently inscribed in the neo-liberal fantasy (or propaganda) it would appropriate back for the then bruised “Left.” But it also faces the transparency by which market democracy not only appears a Potemkin figure itself but, in fact, guarantees planetary ruin by the demographic requirements of cars alone for any emerging middle class of India and China (as Arundhati Roy argues). [4] Any focus on global population control runs up against feminist progressivism [Hedges 2009; Hartman 2009]; post-colonial narratives that would restoratively mime the promise of 90’s neo-liberalism of a world of market democracy would require three planets of resource materiel to allow dispossessed others to reach our levels of prosperity. The profound 90’s investment in the “otherness of the other,” an other who would be recognized, communed with, raised into the polis, and colonized, appears today as a stubborn archaism and, perhaps, as an epochal error, that maintained the sovereign trace of subjective mastery. It would seem that both metaphysics and its deconstruction jointly participated in what is now disclosing itself as the “anthropocene”—an epoch of self-affirmation into which Enlightenment ideologemes have played, as Dipesh Chakrabarty analyzes in the term “freedom.” [5] The impasse between today’s spellbound and rapacious present and supposed future generations, the rupture of any imagined moral contract to or recognition of same, has been in circulation for a while. The present volume of essays focuses on this under-examined question: how do mnemotechics, conceptual regimes, and reading—a certain unbounded textualization that exceeds any determination of writing—participate in or accelerate the mutations that extend, today, from financial systems to the biosphere? The volume gives this a name, telemorphosis.

**Vote affirmative to endorse a radical disidentification with the subject and current systems of domination that support resource extraction. Far from lacking theory, politics is saturated by it – referential regimes of memory that authorize and legitimize destruction – only a disoccupation solves. Cohen 3:**

The rapacious present places the hidden metaphoric levers of the eco or oikos in an unsustainable exponential curve, compounding megadebt upon itself, and consuming futures in what has been portrayed as a sort of psychotic trance—what Hillis Miller calls, in this volume, a suicidal “auto-co-immunity” track. [2] Yet the “Sovereign debt crisis” corresponds to a credibility crisis as well. The latter applies not only to the political classes of the post-democratic klepto-telecracies of the West but seems to taint the critical concepts, agendas, and terms received from twentieth-century itineraries that accompanied the last decades and that persist as currency. Far from opening beyond the propriety of the oikos theories of affect, living labor and critical legacies have doubled down on their investments, created guilds as reluctant as Wall St. to give up cognitive capital. All the while there is attention paid to ‘saving’ the humanities or a critical industry that might be extended for a while longer (as if with “sovereignty” itself). Bruno Latour [2010] presumes to call this recent and ongoing episode the “Modernist parenthesis” of thought. In his conjecture, the very pre-occupation with human on human histories, culturalism, archivism, and the institutions of power were complicit with a larger blind that, in his view, the ecological crisis belatedly discloses. [3] At the moment of writing it is common to point to the 2011 “occupy” movement, viral and cloud-like, as the Bartlebyesque counter to a totalization of the systems of this control. Bartleby has become the figure for a rejection of end-fixated production. Were one able to speak of an occupy movement applied to critical concepts and twentieth century derived idioms one might imagine a call to occupy critical theory and conceptual networks—but with what interruption of received programs (“Sovereign debt”), what alternative materialities, what purported “ethics” involving commodified futures (and the structure of debt), what mnemotechnics, and with resistance to what power, if it is the oikos itself, the metaphoric chimera and its capture of late anthropocene imaginaries that is at issue? This is one of the implications of what this volume terms telemorphosis, the intricacy by which referential regimes, memory, and reading, participate in these twenty-first century disclosures. The occupy motif, at the moment, sets itself against a totalization or experience of foreclosure—political, mediacratic, financial, cognitive. Various strategies appearing in this volume involve what could equally be called a disoccupy logic or meme. Such a logic of disoccupation assumes that the domain in question is already saturated, occupied in the militarist sense by a program that, unwittingly, persists in the acceleration of destruction and takeover. Critical thought of recent decades would have walked hand in hand with the current foreclosures. The explication of ecocatastrophic logics, accordingly, are not found in Foucault nor, surprisingly, Derrida. Timothy Morton’s Ecology without Nature is one such effort at disoccupation—seeking to void the two terms of the title, and in the process disrupt the “revised organicisms” of contemporary critical schools which, he argues, have managed to lapse into sophisticated pre-critical modes not unrelated to a more general inertia. The meme of disoccupation resonates, for instance, with what Robert Markley in this volume proposes as a practice of “disidentification,” and is implied by Timothy Clark’s tracking of a “derangement of scale” in the perpetual cognitive disjunctures that come up against the ecocatastrophic present. One would disoccupy the figure of subjectivity, refusing not only the comforting commodifications of “the other” in cultural theory, but also [and] the later moral appeals to other redemptive beings, such as the animal (as Joanna Zylinska argues with regard to post-humanism and its “animal studies”). What might be disoccupied would be the metaphorics of the home, even where the latter would sustain itself today in cherished terms like trauma, affect, alterity, embodiment, or even culture. Yet a refusal of supposed redemptive ‘outsides’ to capitalism does not lead to a place of critical purity beyond the implied moralism of ‘occupy’ but the return of, and orientation to, a violence before which no model of sovereignty can be sustained. To imagine that one might disoccupy by refusing all the supposed redemptive ‘outsides’ to capitalism is not to find a place of critical purity beyond the moralism of ‘occupy.’ Occupation is never simply takeover and appropriation, but always involves destruction of what it claims. The viral migration of the “occupy” motif involves a premise of disoccupation covertly. In the present volume this takes different forms. If one is now beyond tipping points in a zone of irreversibility, what corresponds to this as a critical injunction? Catherine Malabou sets aside the entire way the figure of trauma and the “always already” has organized time. Claire Colebrook affirms, rather than accepting as tragic, extinction as a point of departure for thought, which can be used to work against the organicist ideologies of the present (such as sexual difference). Martin McQuillan shifts the referential spectrum of discourse to “other materialities” in the hypothesis of a post-carbon thought, while Robert Markley tracks the influx of geological times that displace human narrative matrices. Bernard Stiegler voids the biopolitical model, which he sees as exceeded by “the third limit of Capitalism” (when it impinges on the biosphere). From that point of excess he strategizes a counter-stroke to the capture of attention by telecratic circuits, initiating a noopolitics. Joana Zylinska disoccupies, to continue this motif, the covert model of soft “otherness” by which animal studies has invented itself as an anthropo-colonianism. Like post-humanism generally, Zylinska argues, animal studies sustains its subjectal hegemonies. Hillis Miller locates a source for the ecocatastrophic imaginary in the blind insistence of “organicist” models of reading that sustain the comforts of the oikos. Against this hermeneutics of security Miller posits an “ecotechnics” that is at once machinal and linguistically based (where language is not communicative, but literal and inscriptive in a manner exemplified by Kafka’s Odradek). Justin Read displaces any biopolitical model, again, by relinquishing trauma, the oikos, survival and interiorities of any manner, instead describing the circulation of data (or the “unicity”) from which the only remaining political gesture would be oriented to the ecocatrastrophic. Jason Groves shifts the referential screen from, again, a human-centered index to the viral textualism of (alien) species invasion, the global rewriting of bio-geographies. Mike Hill transitions to the alteration of atmospherics under the imaginary of climate war technologies in a new horizon of invisible wars (and wars on visibility), which today include not only nanotechnologies but also the “autogenic” turning of wars without discrete (national) enemies into suicidal rages against the “homeland”—a sort of, again, auto-occupation that is accelerating.

**The resolution leaves unquestioned the economic relations of the subject. My interpretation of resolution demands production without economy, energy beyond carbon. McQuillan[[2]](#footnote-2) 12:**

Modern as the phenomenon might be and while philosophy has a great deal to say about “energy,” for example, if I might be allowed to paraphrase one of Derrida’s more familiar hyperboles: no philosopher as a philosopher has ever taken seriously the question of oil. Oil and carbon emission has a massive readability today and may define the most acute moment of the paroxysm that makes the present crisis like no other. This is not to say that there have not previously been bouts of financial uncertainty and environmental disasters precipitated by oil. In fact, the history of oil production might be nothing other than a chain of such instances. Rather, the most decisive index of the present moment is the toxic combination of climate change caused by carbon emission, the urgency for global capital of the risks of peak oil, and the central role played by oil trades in the global economy. We might go so far as to say on this later point that the entire practice of the western economy, that is the so-called global economy, depends upon oil. That is to say, that while the idea of the world market and of the “free exchange” of goods has a philosophical heritage running through early modern humanism and enlightenment thought, our present understanding of all exchange, debt, and faith runs through oil. To speak of a post-carbon economy might in fact be to say something quite radical, given that our present situation is so intensively related to the price of oil. To think an industrialized economy without the price of oil may on the one hand simply be a question of swapping one transcendental signifier for another, as gold was replaced by oil, so oil might be replaced by a trade in plutonium recycling. On the other hand, an opportunity exists here to understand economy as an experience of difference and as an encounter with the wholly other. This would require an other understanding of economy, one that was not dedicated to the utilization of wealth (what we now call a “restricted economy”) but one in which we began to understand the complexities of a sovereign economic term such as gold or oil, not in its loss of meaning but in relation to its possible loss of meaning (what Derrida, after Bataille, after Hegel calls a “general economy”). [5] In this sense, a “post-carbon economy,” presents an opportunity for a consideration of economy not to be limited to the circulation of strictly commercial values, the meaning and established value of objects such as gold, oil, and plutonium or so-called “carbon swaps.” Rather than a phenomenology of values as a restricted economy, we might begin to understand what exceeds the production, consumption, and destruction of value within the circuit of exchange. What Bataille might call “energy” beyond the energy of oil. This would not be a reserve of meaning within economy but an aneconomic writing of economy that is legible because its concepts move outside of the symmetrical exchanges from which they are identified and which according to a certain logic of recuperation they continue to occupy. This task of paleonymy as deconstruction is not one that philosophy will undertake on its own but one that will be played out in the irreversible mutations that take place in the global economy as a consequence of climate change, one which philosophy, opened by the materialism of nonphilosophy, will merely be at the forefront of reporting. It returns us to a familiar problem with which we began: having exhausted the oil reserve and the language of philosophy, the unfinished project of Modernity must continue to inscribe within its frames and language of intelligibility (i.e. philosophy) that which nevertheless exceeds the oppositions of concepts governed by its doxical logic. It is not that nineteenth and twentieth-century thought is incapable of responding to the new crisis of climate change but that climate change is a product of such thought as its latest episode and challenge. On the other hand, such a reading of economy seeks to understand or think what is unthinkable for philosophy, its economic blind spot. The reserves of deconstruction suggest writing in general as a slick economy without oil reserve. Derrida’s text on Bataille and economy was first published in L’arc in May 1967, well into de Gaulle’s diplomatic and economic attack on Bretton Woods and American expropriation of the European economy through dollar investment. His seminar on counterfeit money was given in the academic year 1977–78, between the two shocks in the price of oil in 1974 and 1979, when, as Muriel Spark puts it her 1976 novel The Takeover, “a complete mutation of our means of nourishment had already come into being where the concept of money and property were concerned, a complete mutation not merely to be defined as a collapse of the capitalist system, or a global recession, but a sea-change in the nature of reality as could not have been envisaged by Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud” (127). Spark’s fiction identifies here a “mutation” more significant than the local weather of a global recession or the collapse of western capitalism. She recognizes precisely the deportation of value itself from the symmetrical alternatives of exchange within a restricted economy of meaning. This is not a deconstruction brought about by philosophy but a critical climate change in the entire environment of meaning that shifts and re-settles of its own accord. For sure, capitalism survived the oil crisis of the early 1970s but as result there was an irreversible change and redistribution in the meaning of meaning itself. A clear line can be drawn from the substitution of gold for oil in 1971 to the credit bubble of 2007 and the transformations in capitalism (around futures and credit transfer derivatives) and the global economy (around the planetary production and consumption of natural resources). The question of the price of oil, and so of the petrodollar and the pricing of the global economy, must always be a question of the phenomenon of credit. The monetary crisis of 2007, the so-called “credit crunch,” was a matter of the credit-worthiness and the credibility of the value of assets. Oil futures and the future of oil are a question of credit and so of faith: belief in the conventional authority of the market and the credibility of the economy, economists, and politicians. The authority of the market is constituted by the accreditation, both in the literal sense of capitalization and creditworthiness in future exchanges but also in the sense of legitimation as an effect of belief or credulity. The authority of a fiction of economy such as a global financial and industrial system based on the future pricing of petroleum depends upon a planetary act of faith that far exceeds the credibility required to believe in climate change. It should not be surprising that the current financial crisis is a crisis of credit, a monetary crisis based upon the exchange of credit itself independent of physical assets, a dematerialization of money and value that requires a leap of faith and which in the absence of tangible proof tests that credibility to the limit: a sea change in the very idea of reality. Carbon is the element that oils faith in the global economy. It is inextricably bound to the history of a formation of a world that is essentially Abrahamic and European. It is over the question of the propriety of oil that the geopolitical now plays out all the contests between Europe and its others, and between the religions of the book. [6] The price of oil is the liquidity that fuels what Derrida called in 1994, “the world war” between all the people of the book, whose preeminent figure is “the appropriation of Jerusalem” (Spectres 52). Faith in the book and faith in oil are the two pillars of globalization and the temple of capitalism. In the complex history of the development of industrial capital and industrial Capitals, the city, polis and metropolis, oil powers the transformation of monetary forms from the pre-modern faith in metals to the belief in credit exchanges and credit-worthiness of the name as signature or future position. In this history of Modernity, oil is surely then closely linked to literature, not only as the energy source that fuels the illumination of literary production, but as the alternative, yet intimately related, site of an idea of credit, debt, and belief that runs across the modern period. Oil itself is not the stuff of literature, although certain exceptional cases might be identified. For example, Melville’s Moby Dick in 1851 is a text on the cusp of a transition from whale oil to hydrocarbons; modern literature would be unthinkable without the automobile, the aeroplane or gas lighting, from The Great Gatsby and Mrs. Dalloway to Sherlock Holmes. Zola’s Germinal is one of many texts on the subject of carbon extraction, and Dickens’ Hard Times is notable for its description of Coketown: better examples could no doubt be multiplied. On the other hand, film is the stuff of oil, and cinema is only a special case within the history of modern literature.

**Instead of imagining a world governed by traditional notions of agency, I ask you to imagine climate change as something nonhuman, more than human: inhuman. Cohen 4:**

Given more, or different times, one might suggest that a sort of affirmative perspective emerges: First: the twentieth century preoccupation with human on human justice might be interrupted, with incompatible referentials arriving that would operate beyond archival memory and social history. Second, what we call the “political” would migrate from an exclusively social category (Aristotle), as it has been defined in relation to the polity, to a cognitive or epistemographic zone. Third, the era of the Book and its attendant nihilisms (alphabeticist monotheism) would appear as a dossier in the trajectory of telemorphic practices and memory regimes. Fourth, rather than segregate textual premises from the “real” world according to referential regimes and theotropes, the notion of text would intensify the sense of multiscalar and inhuman logics all operating in an open field that would be better referred to as an (a)biosemiosis, or nano-inscriptive process. Finally, in the “anthropocene era,” writing practices might be apprehended in their interweave with carbon and hydro-carbon accelerations, from a position beyond mourning and the automatisms of personification, or “identification.” What emerges in the above postulates is that a hermeneutic reflex and semantic ritual might be repositioned. We would not only locate reactive processes of meaning in the sphere of textual criticism [and] but discern a broader tendency towards the foreclosure of forces of the future. A certain reading practice—or returning to the proper (or the other) from which one might draw credit—would be akin to cannibalizing a fantasmatic past for the sake of an unreal future. The financial system in its current vortices, in which global currency collapse is constantly threatened, resembles the “unsustainability” of resource consumption and global heating. And each echoes with the current cognitive trances—“unsustainable,” yet extending themselves credit (“quantitative easing”). To think that the modern question of power ought to be one of mourning and sovereignty—or of questioning how we lost an originary openness and fell into systemic closure, or how we failed to recognize some genuine others—precludes facing up to the fact that misrecognition, violent dispersal, decentred and inhuman forces have produced the mourned other and the sovereign as a lure that closes down confrontation with disappearing “futures.” At issue is not just moving “beyond” the fetishization of mourning (get over it!) but parrying this steel trap relapse that, as in the model of the organicism analyzed by Hillis Miller (“it’s everywhere”), fuels the acceleration. One returns to a putative domain of very small things: inscriptions, nano-settings, memory regimes, perceptual settings. The contemporary trends of today’s theory “after theory” often circle back to pre-critical premises. And they share a curious trait, aside from mourning 20th century master texts. Without disjuncture, the “new” model of networks and holistic circuitry that binds humanity and effortlessly traverses otherness and inter-species communications is the oddest replica of the previous organicisms whose suspension was the beginning of “theory” as such. [8] One is left with the impression that, as Žižek remonstrates of “the critical Left” during the ‘naughts [Žižek 2009], recent critical pre-occupations discretely collaborate with the accelerations we are witnessing today.

**Absent a critique of mnemotechnics, any knowledge or skill we gain from this debate is forgotten – progressive politics has been consumed by the psychosis of corporate design, epistemic prerequisite to their arguments. Cohen 5:**

Bruno Latour, as observed above, offered a curious fable in which he identifies what he calls the “Modernist parenthesis” as the default mode of thought that accompanied the disclosure of an ecocatastrophic horizon. The twentieth century focus on “critique” that would be transfixed with reading and rewriting its own chaotic histories would have walked hand in hand with the unfolding impasse to terrestrial life. Latour’s “Modernist parenthesis” includes the very project of critique and a pre-occupation with the past at the expense of addressing the past’s now exponentially accelerated consequences. Latour—whose speculation departs from a painfully Gaiesque reading of the film Avatar—proposes that, as part of any reset today, the term materiality ought to be retired as part of a faux binary. He also recommends jettisoning the term “future”, which he would replace with the ratcheted down and humbled term “prospects.” The label “Modernist parenthesis” is an intriguing trope. It resonates with a term like the “anthropocene” that can only, it implies, be pronounced in a future past tense which the speaker would inhabit. What might reading be if we were already looking back at our present, from a future that we cannot yet allow? Latour seems unaware to what degree he inscribes himself in this specular construction, both by his use of the retro-organicism of the Gaia metaphor and his premise, a signature of the “modernist” gameboard, of announcing a temporal break and new beginning, the revolutionary hypothesis of his imagined “parenthesis.” It is thus reluctantly that he finds his way back to a canonical twentieth century text, the “tired… trope” of Benjamin’s Angel of History to make his point: I want to argue that there might have been some misunderstanding, during the Modernist parenthesis, about the very direction of the flow of time. I have this strange fantasy that the modernist hero never actually looked toward the future but always to the past, the archaic past that he was fleeing in terror. […] I don’t wish to embrace Walter Benjamin’s tired “Angel of History” trope, but there is something right in the position he attributed to the angel: it looks backward and not ahead. “Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet.” But contrary to Benjamin’s interpretation, the Modern who, like the angel, is flying backward is actually not seeing the destruction; He is generating it in his flight since it occurs behind His back! It is only recently, by a sudden conversion, a metanoia of sorts, that He has suddenly realized how much catastrophe His development has left behind him. The ecological crisis is nothing but the sudden turning around of someone who had actually never before looked into the future, so busy was He extricating Himself from a horrible past. There is something Oedipal in this hero fleeing His past so fiercely that He cannot realize—except too late—that it is precisely His flight that has created the destruction He was trying to avoid in the first place. [Latour 2010: 485–6] This default appeal to Oedipus is perhaps too quick. Latour creatively misreads the “tired… trope” of an Angel who is, in Benjamin’s text, already something of a charlatan. The Angel is thoroughly impotent, aware of the scam of what the undead masses expect of him (to make them whole). “He” can’t give the undead masses and debris of history, turned toward him, what they want but lingers, as if wanting to, until he is simply torn away by what is called a “storm from the future.” This last angel is but the ragdoll of a certain angelicism—not just the costumed human face (with wings) imposed on the sign as messenger, here of no message, but the entire will to redemption narratives that his very form signifies. The text reads differently if one focuses on the word in Benjamin’s text, “storm,” which is repeated three times as the subject of three declarative sentences. It is a climactic term and subsequently indexed to what Thesis XVIII invokes as the aeons of organic life on earth within which human time appears as fractional seconds (an “anthropocene” perspective). Benjamin’s so-called Angel of History is in fact a vaudevillian figure and not the avatar of the hero, the materialist historiographer. He embodies and destroys both the angelicism of an utopist Marxian and the theotropes of a Cabbalist—the two specular idioms which the Theses fuses in order to cancel one another out. The description of the Angel is so abdicating, deceptive, and suicidal (one can imagine him diving for a cigarette as he looks at the masses) that it nullifies, in advance, the project of materialistic historiography. It also cancels any “weak messianism”—or any messianism whatsoever. The Angel is shown as a con, held to his post by his expectant readership who still wants to be made whole. It will never be clear whether the Angel only thinks this is what is wanted of him, or if the undead masses think he wants them to want this. He is the last trace of anthropopism, dolled up as a human figure to mediate chance. When he is torn away by the “storm” he removes the anthropo-narcissm of angelicism, the lure of giving matter a human form, face and, in this case, betraying bird wings. He is the last personification of a human face plastered on an imaginary other, already a wire-framed incandescent in Klee’s graphic deconstruction. He mimes and is dismissed as the sort of “weak messianism” that Benjamin elsewhere pretends to evoke—and which Derrida will return to, and try to use to keep a rhetoric of the future open (the trope of an impossible “democracy to come”). In this way, the Derrida of Specters of Marx regresses from Benjamin’s destructive project by restituting the phrase “weak messianism.” Derrida’s omission of ecocatastrophic logics from his otherwise compendious agenda—for instance, nowhere to be found in Specters’ “ten plagues” of the new world order—echoes elsewhere in an archival limit he seemed to require for “deconstruction” to rhetorically stage itself. It is not that Benjamin’s Angel trope is about fixation on the past—as archive, trace, histories of power, identity formations, narratives of justice, inscriptions—and hence ritual or time management. It is that “He” thinks that’s what his readers seek in him, and he both gestures toward wanting to oblige (with, say, weak messianism?) and effectively gets out of dodge. Benjamin’s Angel is given to us as a sort of con: knowing what his readership needs and hires him for (since “He” is the messenger of no revelation and reports to no god, is nothing but sign itself), He wants to help but is violently blown away. This lure of redemptive history is about angelicism tout court, its reflex or façade, the compulsion to reconstitute and to be reassured (even sanctified). The trompe l’oeil points not only to where this faux Angel is in costume as the last anthropomorphic form and face. (He looks human, is more or less male traditionally). It also points to the disappearance of the pretended mediation of an otherwise void sign (angel as messenger, as hermeneut). It gives the lie to a certain pretense to ethics, and to cognitive moralisms, and indicates a participation of angelicism in a more radical evil of which it is, adamantly, structurally, and violently unaware. The impulse toward angelicism pervades the recycling of twentieth century critical idioms in sophisticated variations. And this systemic relapse, like the Nachkonstruction of an oikos whose non-existence would accelerate its militarized defense, itself appears to further a suicidal arc. This new angelicism, like what Timothy Morton [2007] calls “revised organicisms,” merits suspicion. It is opportunistic to note where various critical traditions of return and redemption mingle. In a conversation between Lauren Berlant and Michael Hardt on “love” as a political agency at a conference titled “On the Commons; or, Believing-Feeling-Acting Together” we can read yet one more variant of an appeal to an angel that would make us and our past whole. Let us ignore that the commons in question for Hardt and Berlant is not water, oil, or food but the “transformative” zone of a new social “relationality” of liberal souls. “Love” here retains the soft debris and promise of a Christological meme. If for Hardt love “makes central the role of affect within the political sphere,” for Berlant a more aggressive claim erupts: Another way to think about your metaphor, Michael, is that in order to make a muscle you have to rip your tendons. I often talk about love as one of the few places where people actually admit they want to become different. And so it’s like change without trauma, but it’s not change without instability. It’s change without guarantees, without knowing what the other side of it is, because it’s entering into relationality. The thing I like about love as a concept for the possibility of the social, is that love always means non-sovereignty. Love is always about violating your own attachment to your intentionality, without being anti-intentional. [Davis and Sarlin 2011] Perhaps the metaphorical faux pas about “tendons” being ripped is a clue to the skeletal argument (this is not, literally not, the way to build muscle). What one witnesses is the effect of doubling down in the idiom of commitment (“change without trauma”?), a closing off, as academics of a certain age and temperament murmur, narcissistically, about affect. One has found a new name for the oscillation that retains a sovereignty of intentionality under a shifted algorithm: “Love is always about violating your own attachment to your intentionality, without being anti-intentional.” Sometimes, as we hear, it’s just not about us, even where self-love is called the commons and projects a socio-union, or jouissance, beyond the confines of a dubious “collective” individualism. Perhaps this is one marker of an end of a cycle, this fusion of critical and culturalist idioms, returning to a redeeming origin—this time as “farce.” This sort of eddy appears as the comfort spa for what could be called academic theory’s “Lehman moment.” 5. What is interesting in the horizons converging at present is not how a certain irreversibility impacts or is excluded still by telecracies and cognitive regimes. Nor is the main point of interest how sophisticated critical agendas have discretely served an agenda of institutional inertia—especially in the guise of critique. What is interesting is not the shape this will take, the variable catastrophes that are calculable or envisioned. What should be interesting is a logic of foreclosure or psychosis that has become, in part, normatized, accommodated or confirmed by corporate media. [9] This psychosis takes the form of excluding, occluding, or denying what is fully in the open and palpable, whether in science or before one’s eyes. Latour assumes that a “Modernist parenthesis” erred by its assiduous focus on rereading the past otherwise, but he misses the target of Benjamin’s cartoon. It is not attention to the past but rather angelicism that constitutes a violent hermeneutic relapse. Perhaps an example of Latour’s paralyzing ‘parenthesis’ would be Derrida’s injunction against thinking the “future” in order to keep open the incalculable and the “to come.” In fact, the current plunge in economic and societal “prospects”—lost “sovereignty,” debt enslavement, banker occupation, collapse of reserves, and so on—is not premised on an undue focus on the past but is all about alternative time-lines. In this respect Latour’s “prospects” run into the same capture of futures that occurs in the market, whether manipulated from above to defer reckoning (the “too big to fail” logic) or bet against. Calculations about future events, the forward narratives that flood media and alternative journalism, suggest a time in which the commodification of the “past” has flipped forward—marking both past and future as fantasmatic projections. One is not, so to speak, nor have we been, outside of “literary” constructions, least of all when we say something like system or reserves. What is called the market, now technically rogue in the sense that it serves as a façade of manipulations to play for time, is all about bets on future circumstance. Expanded to commodified futures and derivatives, and credit default swaps; wired through ingenious and self-imploding “financial instruments”—said market parallels the global despoilment of future reserves and times (generations). It would be indulgent to run through variations of this. Some are familiar: the consolidation of a new form of totalitarianism and internal security apparatuses; new climate war technologies (applied internally) testing the “full spectrum dominance” protocols that the Pentagon retains as its post-imperial template (which Mike Hill explores in this volume). Some are becoming visible: untimed prognoses of biospheric collapse (marine food chains), extreme weather disasters (mega-drought, flooding, fracking induced quakes). Others hover at the edge of recognizability: mass extinction events, the mathematics of global population “culling.” These nonetheless, like hydo-carbons and oil itself, literally shape visibility and invisibility—no oil, no hyper-industrial techno-culture, no photography as we know it, no cinema, no global transport. Is there an imperative, as Martin McQuillan suggests, to rethink the histories of writing and cognition in relation to carbon and hydrocarbon culture explicity—and to do so not only in relation to human mnemo-technologies? When Claire Colebrook converts extinction from a tragic taboo to an affirmative perspective she deflates the semantic boundedness that any angelicism has always sought to save. The problem is not that the past draws human narcissism toward it in the latter’s critical revisionism and deconstructions; the problem is that the more active “other temporalities” intervene, the more the artefacted present appears spellbound.

Reasonability – voting aff doesn’t eradicate LD debate – I just have to prove that I’m acceptable. Threshold of the being able to engage and provide disadvantages to the advocacy excludes frivolous theory or T positions that depend upon the neg not doing the necessary research. Turns race to the bottom and arbitrariness – debate becomes a race to see who have cases that address increasingly fewer important issues to continually defer to theory. The interps are coopted. Have suspicion of their interp, case proves that current ways of thinking construct those ideas to avoid changing, make them explain away the AC args away before their theory or T becomes relevant.

1. Tom Cohen, Professor of Literary, Cultural, and Media Studies at University at Albany, State University of New York, Ph.D., from Yale University, 2012, “Introduction: Murmurations—“Climate Change” and the Defacement of Theory” in *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change, Vol. 1*, [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Martin McQuillan, Professor of Literary Theory and Cultural Analysis at Kingston University, 2012, “Notes Toward a Post-Carbon Philosophy” in *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change, Vol. 1*, [↑](#footnote-ref-2)